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## Editorial

# Unite to end the US-Arroyo regime

**T**here are only a few days remaining before the reactionary elections on May 10. Many Filipinos hope that with these elections, the reign of the hated US-Arroyo will finally come to an end.

The people have had enough of the US-Arroyo regime. In its nine years in power, the economy continuously slumped, unemployment shot up and poverty, hunger and oppression became more widespread.

The puppet regime has been subservient to the dictates of its US imperialist master. It has allowed the permanent presence of American troops in the country and the intervention of the US in the Philippines' major affairs, including the elections, to perpetuate American neo-colonial rule in the country.

The allout implementation of imperialist neocolonial policies has destroyed the productive forces and worsened the land problem and the backward and depressed state of the economy. Plunder and corruption persist. The people are severely deprived of such services as health, education, housing and other basic necessities. The reactionary government has become more bankrupt and mired in debt.

The nine-year Oplan Bantay Laya has exceeded the brutality and terror of all previous antipeople campaigns of suppression carried out by the reactionary state. It has surpassed the 14-year US-Marcos fascist dictatorship in terms of the number of extrajudicial kill-

ings and abductions of activists, and has unleashed terror, forced mass evacuations and other human rights violations nationwide.

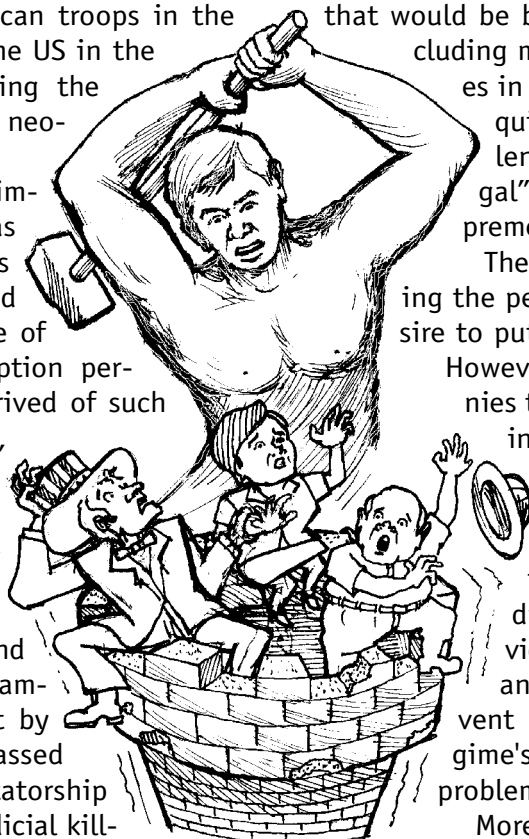
Gloria Arroyo has not relented in her maneuvers to ensure her stay in power through various means. She and her ilk are prepared to take the long route of securing a seat in Congress, taking power as Speaker and pushing "Chacha" until she gets the post of Prime Minister under a new parliamentary system. But she is also prepared to instigate and exploit the confusion

that would be brought about by the elections (including massive failure and the many glitches in the automated polls) and adopt the quicker route of using outright violence. She will also try to obtain "legal" approval for these through a Supreme Court under her control.

These shenanigans are further inflaming the people's anger and firing up their desire to put an end to Arroyo's rule.

However, the cacophony that accompanies the reactionary elections is distracting the people. The superficial response to the people's longstanding grievances, the gimmickry and the intense conflict among reactionary parties and candidates are drawing the people's attention, dividing them and obscuring the bigger and more important struggle to prevent the extension of the current regime's rule and address the people's basic problems.

More than ever, all opposition parties



## *This issue's highlights...*

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**Ka Bel's marker  
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and candidates must be persuaded to unite alongside the people once the ruling clique attempts to forcibly retain Gloria Arroyo in power.

The broadest possible unity must be forged among all anti-Arroyo forces to make sure that the regime is put to an end and held accountable for all its crimes against the people. The people must be vigilant and actively thwart the ruling clique's devious plots. The broad masses of the people must actively work with the anti-Arroyo forces to bring Arroyo's rule to a decisive end, however intense or long the struggle may be.

Within the united front and in the course of the struggle to end the US-Arroyo regime, the people's long-standing grievances must be brought to the fore along with the basic issues that must be addressed under any dispensation that would succeed the hated regime.

At the same time, the people must also be wary of, and expose and resist, the intensified intervention of US imperialism.

In the coming days and weeks, the several years of struggle to end the ruling US-Arroyo regime will take center stage in the nation's politics and may lead to a big eruption. Whatever the outcome of the current elections and to whatever Arroyo extent will bring her maneuverings, the conflicts among rival reactionary factions are bound to intensify. The extraordinary aggravation of the rifts among the reactionaries and the tremendous disarray of the reactionary state will be a favorable opportunity that must be taken advantage of to further advance the people's resistance and achieve a big leap in the revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary forces and the people must gear for and take advantage of the rare opportunity to further advance not just the struggle to oust the US-Arroyo regime but the continuing struggle to end the entire rotten puppet reactionary ruling state and system. AB


# "Oplan RAFAEL" in full swing

**B**ayan Muna (BM) exposed on May 5 the existence of "Oplan Retain Arroyo through Failure of Elections" (Oplan RAFAEL), a general plan of the Arroyo clique to remain in power. BM Rep. Teddy Ca-siño said that if one were to link current developments, one could see that Oplan RAFAEL's various components are now being imple-

mented and the plan in full swing. The exposé came after the trouble wrought by the malfunction of Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) machines tested in five cities and four provinces of Luzon on May 3. The PCOS machines are the computers that will be used to count the votes in the country's first-ever automated elections.

The May 3 dry run revealed that the flash cards that contained the data on which the computer would base its vote count were defective. In a number of mock elections for the presidency, the machines kept on counting Malacañang bet Gilbert Teodoro's name, no matter which candidate's name was marked in the sample ballot. There were many other glitches like this when the votes were counted on the local level.

The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and Smartmatic-TIM both claimed that the flash cards had problems reading the votes only because of revisions in the ballots' design, and that they would be able to replace the defective cards by May 7 or on election day at the latest. It already took two months to prepare the flash cards, so there are widespread doubts that all of the 76,000 defective cards can be replaced in all precincts before May 10. COMELEC and Smartmatic-TIM admitted that in farflung areas, the flash cards may be replaced only on election day itself or even later. Even the PCOS machines may not even arrive on



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time in such areas. In such cases, COMELEC officials said they would just keep the filled ballots in a safe place and feed them into the PCOS machines once the latter and the new flash cards arrive. But since it is in these same places (including many areas in Moro Mindanao) where massive electoral fraud is perpetrated, there are widespread fears that ballots that have been filled but have yet to be counted will be tampered with before they are fed into the PCOS machines.

The COMELEC has reported that the automated and manual counts in a number of precincts in Metro Manila where the new flash cards have been tested have already tallied. This has failed, however, to dispel fears that in many areas, the new flash cards will make electronic poll fraud possible, although in a more sophisticated manner in order to make the results appear more credible. Despite many requests, the COMELEC has refused to subject the source code to reviews by independent information technology experts in order to ensure that the PCOS machines are free of defects. The source code is the software used to run the PCOS machines.

Despite COMELEC's decision to push through with the May 10 elections and its assurances that it would come up with plans to meet whatever major contingencies may arise on the day of the polls, Arroyo herself has not set aside the possibility that the elections will not take place. She and her cohorts in Malacañang have been holding a series of meetings on this matter and have instructed the military to be on alert in case a major emergency arises during the automated count.

Already in place are five of the eight conditions

for a failure of elections to take place that would usher in Arroyo's stay in power beyond her term, said Cañino.

Aside from the problems that have arisen regarding the automated count and proposals to suspend the elections, the other elements are 1) the absence of a sitting Senate President who could temporarily take over should there be no president or vice president proclaimed; 2) Arroyo's appointment of a new

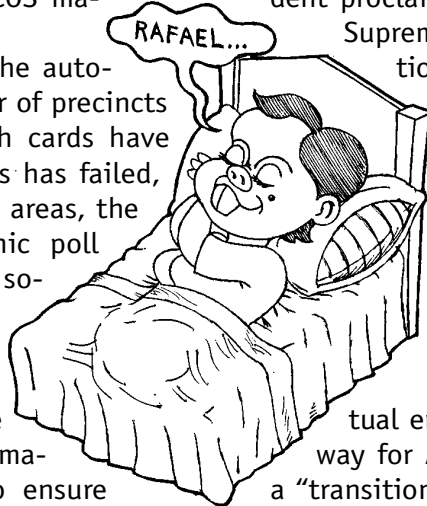
Supreme Court chief justice despite constitutional prohibitions on such appointments

two months before the elections until the end of her term; 3) the appointment of Arroyo's most loyal generals (including those involved in electoral fraud in the 2004 polls) to leading positions in the Armed Forces of the Philippines; and 4) granting the military an expanded role in the electoral process.

The only ingredient missing is the actual eruption of violence that would pave the way for Arroyo's continued exercise of power as a "transition president."

Meanwhile, the AFP has already deployed more than 2,300 soldiers in ten cities of Metro Manila branded as election hotspots. There is also an additional 1,800 soldiers and police elements in five of these cities where poll violence is most likely to erupt. The thousands of soldiers that have been deployed in Metro Manila are on top of the three military battalions assigned to the AFP National Capital Regional Command.

In the face of all this, Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo has called for a stop to mudslinging and for rival candidates to unite and frustrate Oplan RAFAEL. He said the sinister scheme can only be defeated by a united people.



## People power is needed should there be failure of elections

**P**eople power is necessary should the automated elections fail in May. Thus declared progressive groups within the Catholic Church in case there is widespread cheating and should there be no president, vice president and senators proclaimed.

The groups explained the im-

portance of people's collective action in the face of Manila archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales' statement that it was irresponsible for a candidate or a group to call for People Power should there be electoral fraud.

The people must fight if there is cheating and if this results in a fail-

ure of elections that could instigate Gloria Arroyo's continued hold on power as transition president, said Fr. Jose Dizon of Solidarity Philippines and one of the convenors of Kontra Daya, a coalition of organizations and individuals advocating clean and credible polls.

If the people need to engage in collective action to unleash their strength and thwart such an evil scheme, they are well within their rights, said Fr. Dizon.

Nonetheless, such collective

action is not the exclusive right of a single group or party but is for the interest of the Filipino people, he added.

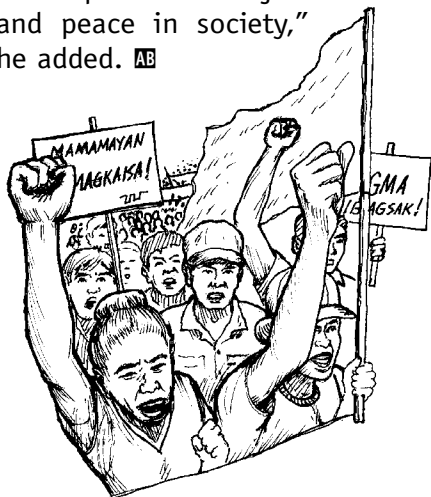
On the other hand, Sr. Mary John Mananzan, president of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) and a fellow convenor of Kontra Daya said that people take to the streets because it is the only option left to them.

Sr. Mananzan said that the people do not trust Congress, the Supreme Court and practically any other agency of government under the Arroyo government.

It would constitute a bigger sin for the Catholic Church not to act under such conditions, said Sr. Mananzan. The Church must not watch from the sidelines and allow the people's rights to be trampled upon.

Archbishop Emeritus Oscar Cruz agreed with the views of the two religious leaders. He also expressed his readiness to join the mass movement should the outcome of the coming polls be contrary to the people's true will and should the electoral process be dubious.

It is wrong not to "speak and to do nothing in the face of the commission of an atrocity", said Archbishop Cruz. "A priest needs to be concerned about truth and justice. Clerics have to be involved in the promotion of justice and peace in society," he added. **AB**



## 38 of Morong 43 transferred to Camp Bagong Diwa

**A**t last, the Philippine Army was compelled to comply with court orders to transfer health workers arrested by soldiers in Morong, Rizal in February to a civilian detention facility. Thirty-eight of the "Morong 43" were transferred to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City from the 2nd ID headquarters in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal on May 1.

It will be remembered that there were court orders as early as April 7 to transfer the detainees to police custody. Their

transfer to Camp Crame in Quezon City on April 12 did not push through when the police refused to take custody of the detainees on the pretext that the camp's detention facilities were already cramped.

Five of the detainees are still in the custody of the Philippine Army after they allegedly admitted to being members of the New People's Army. The detainees' admission is believed to have been the result of severe torture in the hands of the military. **AB**

## Rights groups, victims oppose deal with Marcoses

**V**ictims of human rights violations during the Marcos dictatorship are up in arms against the latest attempt by the Arroyo regime to strike a deal with the dictator's family on the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth.

The Arroyo government's plans to compromise with the Marcoses have been dubbed the "mother of all midnight deals." Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) commissioner Ricardo Abcede said on April 30 that there are ongoing talks with the Marcoses to forge such a deal. He said he has had talks with the late dictator's son-in-law Gregorio Araneta on the government's recovery of P140 billion worth of ill-gotten wealth that is still the subject of 520 civil cases. Abcede nonetheless refused to divulge the details of their conversation.

The victims' lawyer Atty. Romeo Capulong noted the Arroyo government's haste in entering such a scandalous deal. Capulong added that the government should pursue its cases against the Marcos family because it has been winning its cases,

Ten thousand victims of the dictatorship had earlier filed a class suit against the Marcoses before a US court in 1995 and won. However, they have yet to collect \$2.7 billion in damages awarded by the court.

Capulong said the 10,000 victims will oppose any deal with the Marcoses once this is filed before the Sandiganbayan. **AB**



## Maguindanao massacre case to be filed before UN

**R**eporters Sans Frontières (RSF) warned the Arroyo government that it would file the Maguindanao Massacre case before the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) if the regime fails to hold the guilty parties accountable.

The international media organization aired the warning in an open letter to Arroyo in the last week of April after Justice Secretary Alberto Agra had cleared two members of the Ampatuan clan. The letter was signed by RSF secretary general Jean-Francois Julliard.

The Ampatuan clan has been accused of masterminding the heinous massacre of 57 persons, including 32 media workers on November 23, 2009. Secretary Agra had dropped ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan and Mamasapano, Maguindanao Mayor Akmad Ampatuan from the list of defendants. Malacañang was later forced to order Agra to revoke his decision after the latter triggered mounting criticisms and protest actions from media, the victims' families, their supporters and even government prosecutors.

The RSF warned that if the Arroyo government fails to act on the Maguindanao Massacre just to clear one of its main political allies, it would refer the case to the UNHRC. **AB**

## NPA in Negros seizes 24 firearms

**T**he New People's Army (NPA) in Negros seized 24 firearms in two separate disarming operations before the end of April.

At dusk of April 30, Red fighters under the Roger Mahinay Command (RMC-NPA) raided the Maricalum Mining Company in Barangay San Jose, Sipalay City, Negros Occidental, seizing 20 firearms from armed guards and from two responding policemen from the Sipalay PNP Substation.

The arms seizure comprised 12 Mossberg shotguns, two cal .38 revolvers, two 9 mm pistols, two .22 revolvers, an M16, an M14, a grenade, rounds of ammunition and other military equipment. The NPA held Maricalum Mining Company's chief security guard for a number of hours.

The company was formerly known as the Marinduque Mining and Industrial Corporation and is now managed by G Holdings Inc. The NPA had already warned the company when it raided its airplane hangar more than a month ago.

RMC-NPA spokesperson Ka Nilo Magtanggo said that they raided the company again because it dis-

regarded the NPA's longstanding warning for it to stop shooting at scavengers of scrap metal from its compound. The mining company's guards have killed more than a hundred people over the years.

Earlier, Red fighters from the Roselyn "Ka Jean" Pelle Command (RPC) also disarmed an element of the bandit Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) and two guards employed by a big landlord at a house in Sitio Minauyahan, Barangay Mina-utok, Calatrava, Negros Occidental on April 27. Seized were an M16 rifle with nine magazines, a KG9 machine pistol and two shotguns.

The house, which is owned by the Lumayno family sits on a farm whose administrator is Raul Baterna, a brutal former sergeant of the defunct Philippine Constabulary. Peasants and farm workers working the land have long complained of being terrorized and mauled by the Lumaynos' armed guards.

The RPC said the NPA has received orders from the people's court to arrest Bebe Lumayno and Baterna for cases such as landgrabbing and employing private goons, including elements of the RPA. **AB**

## Soldier killed, 2 wounded in Masbate ambush

A trooper from the 85th IB was killed and three others were wounded in an ambush staged by guerrillas of the NPA Jose Rapsing Command in Barangay Gaid, Dimasalang, Masbate on May 3.

The soldiers who were aboard a truck and led by Col. Lope Dagoy were hit by a command-detonated explosive, said NDF-Bicol spokesperson Ka Greg Bañares.

Bañares said it was the NPA's response to a challenge from Dagoy. Dagoy, who hides behind the UN Peacekeeping Force title, used to command the 19th IB and was the implementor of Oplan Bantay Laya in Leyte in 2005-2007. **AB**



# NPA seizes 27 firearms in Mindanao

**T**he New People's Army (NPA) seized at least 27 firearms of various caliber in arrest and disarming operations against politicians and their armed bodyguards as Red fighters enforced election policies and other directives from the revolutionary government.

**May 5.** Red fighters of the Conrado Heredia Command which is under the NPA Merardo Arce Operational Command in Southern Mindanao arrested Mayor Roberto Luna Jr. of Lingig, Surigao del Sur at a mobile checkpoint set up along the Davao-Agusan National Highway in Barangay Pasian, Monkayo, Compostela Valley. Also arrested were his four bodyguards—PFC John Rey Abao and PFC Arnel Dizon (both assigned to the 58th IB) and policemen PO2 Boy de Castro and PO3 Alan Dapitanon. Seized from them were five M16s, two cal .45 pistols, a 9 mm pistol and a cal .380 pistol.

Luna, who is on his last term as Lingig mayor is running for vice mayor. He was arrested so he could be investigated on criminal and corruption cases filed against him with the people's court. Among these cases are the murder of the Suazo

brothers in Barangay Union, Lingig (2007); the murder of former mayor Amerosin V. Onsing (2001); and the seizure of a 30-hectare landholding in Barangays Pagbacatan and Dahican in Lingig. Luna also faces cases filed in the reactionary courts such as illegal logging, falsification of official documents, corruption and anomalies involving a P26 million bank loan for an irrigation project in 2009.

**April 28.** Red fighters from Front 30 in Mindanao blocked and disarmed the convoy of reelectionist Rep. Philip Pichay and mayoralty candidate Heinrich Pimentel when it passed Sitio Cadlum, Barangay Cabangahan, Tago, Surigao del Sur. Aside from their private army, the group also had escorts composed of men from the PNP Regional Mobile Group.

NDF-NEMR spokesperson Ka Maria Malaya said Pichay and Pimentel's group violated the revolution-

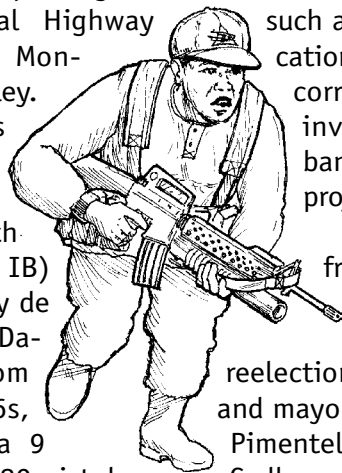
ary movement's policy against bringing firearms during electoral campaigns. Confiscated from the convoy were four AK-47 rifles, three M16 rifles, a cal .45 pistol, a cal .40 pistol and two 9 mm pistols.

**April 24-26.** NPA guerrillas also disarmed Mayor Candelario Viola of Hinatuan town in Surigao del Sur and guards of reelectionist mayor Alberto Tan of Bislig City. The disarming operation took place on Road 13 while the candidates were on their way to Sitio Mamparasan, San Roque, Bislig City.

**April 22.** Red fighters blocked and disarmed a group led by Mayor Donnel Polizon and four members of the Sangguniang Bayan in Barangay Sta. Juana, Tagbina, Surigao del Sur.

**April 20.** The NPA confiscated from Sibagat, Agusan del Sur mayor Thelma Lamanilao two cal .45 pistols, two cal .38 revolvers, a 9 mm pistol and a KG9 machine pistol.

**April 15.** Red fighters disarmed Mayors Alexander Pimentel of Tandag City and Carlos Egay Sr. of Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte. Seized from them were a KG9 machine pistol and a cal .45 pistol. AB



## 12 soldiers killed, 5 wounded in Antipolo ambush

THE New People's Army (NPA) ambushed anew a composite force of the PNP Special Action Force (SAF) and the 16th IB on the afternoon of April 22 in Masalo, Sitio Tayabasan, Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City.

The ambush occurred while police and military forces were conducting pursuit operations against the NPA after the latter ambushed the SAF on April 20 in the same city.

Without their knowing, the Red fighters had laid out an area ambush along the path most likely to be taken by the enemy. The fighting began at around 3 p.m. After an hour, 12 soldiers lay dead and five oth-

ers were wounded, said Macario "Ka Karyo" Liwanag, spokesperson of the Narciso Antazo Aramil Command (NAAC)-NPA-Rizal.

Meanwhile, there were no casualties on the side of the Red fighters, who safely returned to their camp.

To conceal the extent of police and military casualties from the people and the media, two helicopters waited until dark to retrieve the dead and wounded. The AFP-PNP leadership imposed a news blackout on the ambush to prevent the public from finding out about their back to back defeats in the hand of the NPA. AB

### CAFGU elements killed in Davao del Sur ambush

IN Davao del Sur, two CAFGU elements were killed and another wounded when the NPA ambushed a military truck in the morning of April 25 in Barangay Patulangon, Sta. Cruz town. The casualties were all under the 39th IB of the 10th ID.

The oversized NPA squad under the Magtanggol Roque Command-Front 51 seized an M14 rifle. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

NPA Southern Mindanao Regional Political Director Ka Simon Santiago said the ambush was a slap in the face of the 39th IB and 10th ID which recently declared that they had driven the NPA out of Sta. Cruz town. AB

## Mining company declared as people's enemy

**T**he people of Far South Mindanao have declared a big foreign mining company as their enemy for its relentless plunder of natural resources and the widespread environmental destruction this has wrought in south-central Mindanao.

The regional people's court thus ordered units of the New People's Army on April 22 to arrest high-ranking officers of Xstrata and its local partner Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI) to hold them accountable for their crimes against the people.

The National Democratic Front in the region said that the arrest warrant was issued after careful evaluation of the evidence and according to the basic principles of revolutionary justice.

Although the mining company's operations are still at the exploration level, they have already destroyed mountains and watersheds. National minorities living in the affected areas have thus been forced to leave and look for sources of livelihood elsewhere. At present, the mining company's operations affect the main rivers in South Cotabato, Davao del Sur, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

One of the areas affected is the Koronadal Valley watershed in South Cotabato. Koronadal Valley serves as the rice granary of Mindanao.

Xstrata has also reportedly built a tailings pond in the watershed area near the Mal River in Davao del Sur, triggering fears of pollution and the destruction of two national and local communal irrigation systems as well as the livelihoods of 9,000 farmers. AB

## International Workers' Day commemorated nationwide

**W**orkers, urban poor and their supporters took to the streets on May 1 to celebrate International Workers' Day.

Rallies held nationwide were marked by the workers' assessments of Gloria Arroyo's administration. They cited the huge number of unemployed, frozen wages, violations of workers' rights, the exodus of labor and poor working conditions in the factories. They criticized antilabor laws on contractualization and the flexible labor policy as well as the imposition of the expanded value-added tax.

As Gloria Arroyo has been wont

to do every first of May, she refused to grant the workers a wage increase. Arroyo also showed her contempt for International Workers' Day by moving the date of celebration from May 1 to May 3.

The highlight of the May 1 celebrations was the inauguration of Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran's marker at Plaza Miranda in Manila. (*see related article*)

Up to 20,000 people joined the gathering at Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila where they burned an effigy of Gloria Arroyo dressed in prison garb. The effigy called "Kulungan ni Gloria" (Gloria's Prison) symbolized

the workers' demand to hold Arroyo accountable for the sufferings she has caused the workers under her regime.

Rallyists gathered at the corner of Blumentritt and Sta. Cruz, at the intersection of Quirino and Taft Avenues and at Plaza Moriones in Tondo. That afternoon, they marched to Liwasang Bonifacio where they held a program. Bearing torches, the rallyists marched to Mendiola by 6 p.m.

Elsewhere, at least 8,000 people led by Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and Pamantik rallied in Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Rizal provinces.

Cultural presentations and marches marked the International Workers' Day celebrations in the cities of Legazpi, Naga and Masbate in the Bicol region. In Bacolod City,

workers demanded wage increases and the scrapping of the regional wage boards. KMU members in Iloilo City pressed for a ₱125 across the board wage increase in a rally attended by 3,000 members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and other progressive groups from various areas in Panay.

Meanwhile, the workers' march-rally in Davao City turned into a miting de avance for the Makabayan coalition when the rallyists endorsed the candidacies of Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Liza Maza. Up to 10,000 people joined the rally. **AB**

### **Ka Bel's marker inaugurated at Plaza Miranda**

THE celebration of International Workers' Day was highlighted by the inauguration of a marker honoring Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran, noted worker-leader, former chairman of the Kilusang Mayo Uno and Anakpawis party representative who died in 2008.

The bas relief made by sculptor Julie Lluch was attached to a pylon at Plaza Miranda in Manila.

The marker symbolizes the people's recognition of Ka Bel as a working class hero. For decades, Ka Bel was a big part of May First celebrations as he spoke countless times for the workers' rights and welfare.

Ka Bel's marker, which was installed on the initiative of the Manila City government was inaugurated in the morning of May 1. The ceremony was attended by progressive organizations and opposition politicians from various parties. Among those who attended were Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Liza Maza, both candidates for senator; Manila mayor Alfredo Lim; and Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero.

Ka Bel died on May 20, 2008 at the age of 75 after a fall sustained while he was repairing the roof of his house. He was on his third term as congressman. **AB**

### **NDF explains anew NPA's use of explosives**

THE National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) explained anew on April 25 that the New People's Army (NPA) committed no violations of the rules of war when it ambushed a nine-man unit of the PNP Special Action Force in Antipolo City, Rizal on April 20 that resulted in the death of four SAF elements and the wounding of four other policemen.

NDFP Human Rights Monitoring Committee chair Ka Fidel Agcaoili said that the NPA's use of explosives is in accordance with international humanitarian law. The NDFP issued this clarification after reports that Commission on Human Rights (CHR) chair Leila de Lima said the NPA's use of explosives was violative of both human rights law and international humanitarian law.

If the CHR chair did make such a comment, said Agcaoili, she unwittingly echoed the false and unsubstantiated accusation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) against the NPA on the use of land mines. "The AFP and PNP are absolutely ignorant of the facts and the pertinent international law on land mines," Agcaoili said.

Although it is not a signatory to the Ottawa Treaty or any other document on land mines, the NPA and the NDFP have repeatedly declared that the NPA does not use and has never used mines which are not command-detonated and directed against military vehicles and personnel. "Command-detonated mines are not prohibited by any international treaty or convention, including the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols. Such mines are directed at purely military targets," said Agcaoili.

### **Strike paralyzes transport in CALABARZON**

A strike led by PISTON (Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide) succeeded in paralyzing public transport in Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Quezon on May 3. PISTON called the strike to demand an ₱8.00 rollback in oil prices from Shell, Chevron and Petron. PISTON also called for the scrapping of the 12% expanded value-added tax on petroleum products and the immediate refund of ₱46 million in fees collected from drivers for the Radio Frequency Identification.

The strike began at 6 a.m. Before noon, the San Pedro-Biñan City; Sta. Rosa City-Cabuyao-Calamba City; Pagsanjan, Cavinti, Luisiana, Kalayaan, Pakil, Pangil and Siniloan routes in Laguna were 90% paralyzed.

Transportation was also 90% paralyzed in Calamba City, Laguna to Carmona, Cavite and Tagaytay to the Silang area; 80% paralyzed in the cities of Calamba to Tanauan, Batangas and Tanauan to San Pablo in Laguna; and 50% paralyzed in the streets of Quezon province to Lucena City.



## General strike in Nepal

The entire city of Kathmandu has been paralyzed due to an indefinite general strike launched by 125,000 Nepalese since May 2. All businesses, factories, schools and offices remain closed. Not a single vehicle could be seen in the streets.

The general strike is led by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), the largest opposition party within parliament. The CPN-M has been demanding the ouster of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and his government because of their failure to consolidate the peace process and draft a new constitution.

Earlier, protesters also staged a massive rally on May 1 in Kathmandu and demanded a new government founded on national reconciliation. Narayan Kaji Shrestha, one of CPN-M's leaders said they should be given a chance to lead because their party is the biggest inside the constituent assembly.

The CPN-M led a coalition government when it won the election to form a special constituent assembly in 2008. The constituent assembly was tasked to draft a new constitution in accordance with the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006. The CPN-M decided to withdraw from the constituent assembly after the president refused to oust the Nepalese Army chief for his failure to implement the integration of an estimated 20,000 Nepali Red fighters into the state army.

## Kurdish forces attack military detachment in Turkey

KURDISH guerrillas attacked a government military detachment near Nazimiye in eastern Turkey before midnight on April 30. According to initial reports, four soldiers were killed and many others were wounded in the attack. The fighting lasted until dawn, with the guerrillas using rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles.

Fighting between Turkish

government forces and guerrillas under the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has escalated since December. The Kurdish guerrillas have been fighting for an independent Republic of Kurdistan for two decades.

The Kurdish republic they want to establish covers most of southeastern Turkey, the northern part of Iraq, northwestern Iran and northern Syria.

## Protests pressed vs US military base in Japan

UP to 100,000 Japanese rallied on April 25 in Okinawa to demand the removal of Futenma Base, a US Marines base located in the center of the island's most populous city.

It was the biggest rally in the history of the people's resistance to the military base since 1972.

Residents are protesting the presence of US troops, the noise from the airplanes and the destruction of the environment. Since 1972, Okinawans have suffered 26,423 crimes and 456 accidents caused by US troops. Worst among these was the rape of a 12-year old schoolgirl in 1995 by two US Marines and an element of the US Navy. The crime which triggered the biggest people's protest forced Japan and the US to temporarily close down Futenma Base.

In August 2004, a US combat helicopter crashed inside the campus of Okinawa International University. Luckily, school was out and no one was killed or injured. The crash has spawned even stronger protests and resistance from the people.

In an effort to subdue the protests, the US and Japan forged an agreement in 2006 to transfer Futenma Base to another area in Okinawa. Since then, the people have trained their anger at the agreement and demanded the removal of the military base from Japanese territory.

## Massive protests in US vs anti-immigrant law

A SERIES of protests by Americans erupted in 70 cities across the US on May 1 to oppose and resist the racist Immigration Law of the state of Arizona. The protests have spurred stronger calls to revise the US Federal Immigration Law.

The objectionable Immigration Law of Arizona state which was passed in April authorizes policemen to accost and arrest anyone suspected of being an illegal immigrant or alien. The law also requires immigrants to always bring their documents with them. Anyone caught hiring or smuggling in illegal immigrants will be slapped

with heavy fines.

The biggest protests were held in Los Angeles, California where 100,000 people launched a march-rally in the center of the city. Several states have called for a boycott of Arizona, especially California where big cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco have proposed cutting off ties altogether with the state.

In Washington DC, more than 30 rallyists including Illinois Congressman Luis Gutierrez were arrested for blocking the sidewalk in front of the White House gates. US President Barack Obama has been

severely assailed for his failure to fulfill a promise made in 2008 to push for immigration reforms and grant amnesty to 12 million illegal immigrants in the US.

Due to widespread opposition, Obama himself has branded the Arizona law “misguided” and has directed the Justice Department to study whether the law violates the US constitution. It will be remembered that a million Californians launched a gigantic rally in March 2006 against House Immigration Bill 4447 which calls for criminally charging anyone proven to be an illegal immigrant.

## Greece rocked by strikes

A general strike rocked Greece from May 3 to 4 to protest proposed government austerity measures in exchange for a 110 billion euro (equivalent to \$145 billion) bailout by the European Union and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Greek government has been driven to desperation due to its gargantuan deficit. It has failed to pay its debts now running up to \$300 billion, some of it inherited from previous regimes. Many governments fear that the collapse of the Greek economy will further worsen the financial crisis not only in the country but all throughout the European Union and the international capitalist system. Members of the European Union along with the IMF thus bailed out the Greek government by granting it fresh loans—the biggest in European history.

This spurred public sector workers to launch a protest action on May 3. Members of the Communist Organization of Greece (Kommounistiki Organosi EL-

ladas or KOE) entered the old Acropolis in Athens to hang a giant streamer with the words “People of Europe Rise Up.” The Acropolis, which is located atop a hill and is the site of the ruins of ancient temples and buildings is the most prominent place in Athens and is frequented by many tourists.

The protest actions are expected to continue and be joined even by elements of the government armed forces opposed to EU and IMF dictates once the proposed austerity measures are submitted to parliament for approval.

Among the austerity measures drafted by Prime Minister George Papandreou's government are the removal of bonuses for public sector workers; a three-year wage freeze and reduction in the pensions received by the public sector; raising the value-added tax from 21% to 23%; a 10% tax hike on oil, cigarettes, tobacco and liquor; a ceiling on holiday bonuses; and a tax on high-income earners.